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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the efforts of the education faculty at Indiana University Northwest, to build a clinical component into the beginning courses in teacher education. Two hundred and four students composed the study; they were divided into two groups, experimental (109 students) and control (95 students). The control group took two introductory courses for 7 hours of credit. Normally, these courses are offered to sophomores, taken consecutively and taught to large groups of students entirely at the University. The experimental group was required to work 8 hours per week in the classroom. The experimental aspects of the program contained the following assumptions: 1) Separation of the different aspects of the foundation of education creates an artificial barrier in the discipline or the perception of the students. 2) Students should experience public school along with the theoretical stipulations of the program. 3) Public school teachers will accept a program of such nature, since it will give them voice in the University curriculum. 4) Students under this program will be better prepared and will develop a positive attitude toward education. Students and teachers involved in the experimental program reacted positively towards the program. However, evidence that experience helps in the education content has yet to be gathered. A 9-item bibliography is included. (MJM)

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Public School Experience and Its Impact on Pre-Service Education Students

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Traditionally most beginning courses in teacher education are taught entirely at the University to fairly large groups of students. Usually these courses cover the social, historical, philosophical and psychological foundations of Education. This paper describes the efforts of the Education faculty at Indiana University Northwest, Gary, Indiana to build a clinical component into these beginning courses in teacher education.

The major reasons for this effort were twofold. Many students were complaining that introductory courses lacked relevance and did not take into account the social setting that many would eventually find themselves. A random sampling of two hundred fifty recent graduates indicated that introductory courses were the least liked and most criticized of any in the entire teacher education program. Although some students felt that a study of the historical and philosophical foundations of Education was interesting, many felt that the psychological and social aspects studied did not adequately prepare them for entry in the public schools. Many felt that it was extremely difficult to extrapolate the ideas studied in the classroom to the "real world" in which they eventually found themselves.

Some writers arguing for bridging the time gap between theory and practice (Laska, 1969) suggest that placing Education students early in the public school classroom may result in a better integration of content; in other words, may help the pre-service trainees learn the content more effectively. It has

been further assumed that placing Education students on-site early in their training could help foster positive attitudes towards teaching and could generate a positive awareness to one's own abilities.

In other studies recently completed by the authors it was determined that the sociological and psychological aspects of Education can be studied in an intellectually honest fashion while the student is on-site in the public schools (Mannan-Ciminillo, 1971).

In another study (Ciminillo, 1970) it was determined that students who received their training in the sociological and psychological aspects of Education on-site in the public schools scored higher in these areas, on evaluative instruments administered by supervisors or principals, than those trained in conventional way.

Prior to taking course work in professional Education, students at Indiana University Northwest are required to take two introductory courses for seven semester hours of credit. Normally these courses are offered to sophomores, taken consecutively and taught to large groups of students entirely at the University.

This study was an attempt to assess the differences between those courses taught in the conventional ways with those involving public school experiences along with the conventional teaching.

The 204 students involved in the program were divided into experimental and control groups. For the most part the students chose which group they wanted to belong to. Students in the experimental group were required to work eight hours per week in the classroom.

The experimental aspects of the program contained the following assumptions:

1) Separation of the different aspects of the foundation of Education creates an artificial barrier in the discipline or in the perception of the students. So, it is meaningful to teach entire content as a global entity and on a team teaching basis.

2) No Education course should be taught away from the reality-situation for which it is designed - in this case the public school classroom. Consequently, students should experience public school along with the theoretical stipulations of the program.

3) Public school teachers will accept a program of such nature, since it will give them a voice in the University curriculum

4) Students under this program will be better prepared and will develop a positive attitude toward Education.

School Experiences

In cooperation with the School City of Gary, each student was assigned to work with one teacher one full day each week throughout most of the semester. Classroom teachers were thoroughly informed via interviews and written communications, of the nature of the program. Classroom teachers were requested to incorporate students into routine classroom activities. Since these are beginning Education students, the only activity they were not allowed to perform was to teach a class without supervision.

The following were suggested activities that a student could perform:

1) Work individually with one child to help with reading or arithmetic.
2) Make a short lesson presentation to the class, with the supervision and cooperation of the teacher.
3) Opportunity to observe and learn different techniques of social reinforcement through teacher control and/or peer group control.
4) Work with a small group on a particular learning project of any kind.
5) Opportunity to observe and learn about different aspects of discipline.
6) To assist in the social learning of one child, perhaps one who is unusually shy or hostile.
7) Witness a faculty meeting, or staff conference of the teachers and/or administration.
8) Supervise children at recess or lunch playtime, perhaps organize a group game.
9) Have the opportunity to visit and observe other grade levels within the same school.

Design of the Study

The study report covers two academic semesters. A combined reault for those two semesters will be presented here. In all, there were 109 students in the experimental group and 95 in the control group. As has been stated above, the experimental group

worked in the public school eight hours a week during the entire semester as part of the course requirement.

Results

Evaluation of the mastery of content:

Both Objective and Essay type questions were used. The tests were administered in three different units, but were ultimately combined for the purpose of evaluation. There were 103 objective test items and three essay questions. The essay questions were graded on a rating scale from one to nine, by three different Instructors and average rating was taken.

Table I

Mean and Standard Deviation of Objective test scores.

Experimental		Control	
Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
87.2	5.1	86.4	6.3

t = .655 (not significant)
df = 203

Table II

Average Rating for the Essay test.

Experimental		Control	
Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
6.1	2.1	5.9	2.7

t = 1.81 (not significant)
df = 203

Evaluation of Student Attitude

Both the formal and informal procedures were used to evaluate student attitude. On a pre-test - post-test basis, students were administered the Semantic differential test - Affective domain (Husek and Wittrock, 1962). The test consists of thirty-three seven step scales pertinent to teaching and yields data on five factors: general, restraint, tenacity, predictability, and stability. An analysis of covariance using pre-test as covariate was performed on each set of factors. Out of five, only two F ratios were found to be significant at the .05 level - the general factor (F = 5.070) and the tenacity factor (F = 5.18). The poles of the tenacity factor are characterized by such pairs as tenacious/yielding, controlled/spontaneous, stubborn/yielding, and rigid/flexible. The experimental group increased their score toward the right, i.e., toward the flexibility pole. On the general factor the range was from positive judgement on the left toward negative judgement on the right (confident/scared, sensible/foolish, energetic/lethargic, etc.). Again the experimental group made progress toward the positive direction.

The students were also asked to evaluate their school experience on a five point scale from extremely negative to extremely positive. A significant number of students (73.2%) considered the school experience to be positive. The students were also asked if they thought the school experience should be continued as part of course work. An overwhelming number wanted this to be kept (95.4%) as part of the course work, and a majority of them (62.4%) contended that this was the only useful part of

the program.

Public school teachers also voiced similar sentiments, but a majority of them (55%) wanted more structure and direction.

Summary and Conclusion

The clinical experience is now a part of the regular pre-service program. But as we can see, we have yet to gather evidence that the experience helps in the educational content. On the other hand, we score a big plus if we can change the student's attitude and make him more aware of the responsibilities he will assume as a teacher. We contend that teaching is not mere content; attitude and awareness play a very important role. We also believe that there is no sure test for relevance. Each person has to discover his own relevance in their own unique way. The institution can simply generate situations where the individual can apply his knowledge as much as possible; can test his own hypothesis and assumption about life, knowledge and good teaching, etc. Towards that extent the educational institutions must move away from the academic seclusion of the University.

Many Universities are caught on the horns of a dilemma, they feel a need to extend their programs into the community but are unable to do so because of a lack of funds. It is interesting to note, therefore, that this program did not increase the University's cost factor. In addition, this approach has therapeutic as well as educational value as it bridges the relevance gap between the University and the public schools.

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